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ABSTRACT

The manual is intended to provide an overview of career working with exceptional persons. An introduction reviews basic terms and summarizes types of disabilities. Section II focuses on careers in the schools, with information on roles and training of special education teachers, teacher aides, administrators and supervisors, college faculty, and teachers of gifted students. Among health-related professionals covered are physical therapists, occupational therapists, rehabilitation counselors, and creative arts therapists. The importance of understanding disabilities in any occupation is emphasized. A final section lists resources for more information on careers. (CL)

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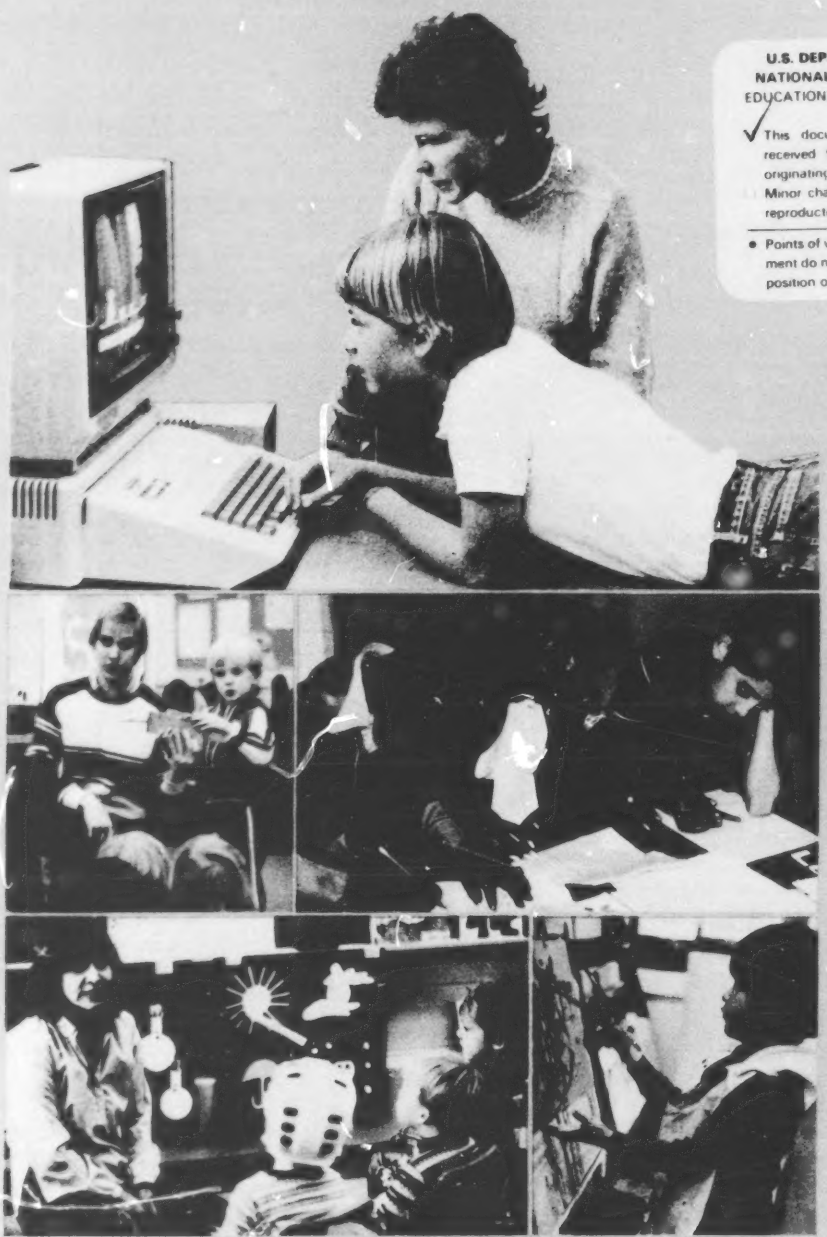
IN SERVICE TO EXCEPTIONAL INDIVIDUALS



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CEC

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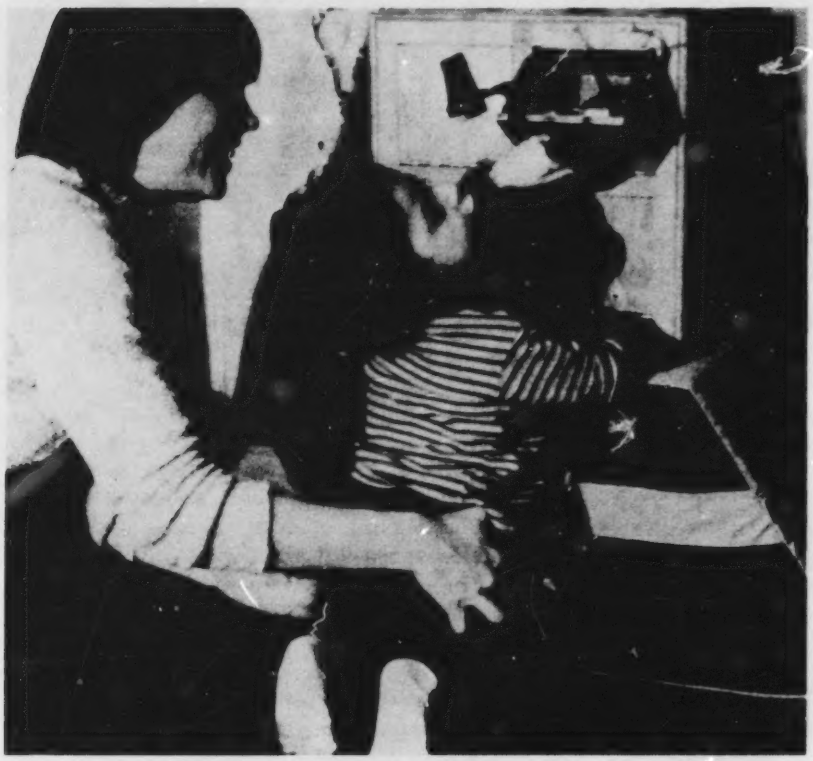
SECTION I

◊ INTRODUCTION ◊



WHO ARE EXCEPTIONAL INDIVIDUALS?

If you were asked to define what makes a person "normal," you'd probably find it hard to put into words. All of us, though, are generally able to recognize normal human behavior, growth, and development. In contrast to the concept of *normal* is the notion of *exceptional*—in other words, a condition or characteristic that is outside the range of what most of us consider normal.

Students who are limited in some way (physically, mentally, or behaviorally) are called exceptional. Students who are considered *gifted and talented* are also outside the range of what we think of as normal, and they too are called exceptional.

Exceptional students are those for whom special education services are designed and carried out.

Special education =
Special help
for
exceptional individuals.

WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION?

Many people, when they first hear the term "special education," don't know quite what to make of it. Several questions come to mind. What does "special" mean? What's so special about special education? Who gets this "special" education—students who are above average in ability . . . students with physical handicaps . . . students with learning problems?

These are all excellent questions, and we'll try to answer them in the following pages. We shall also look at job opportunities and occupations associated with special education, to help you decide whether it might be a field in which you would like to work. But whether or not one works directly in special education, we all must be prepared to meet, interact with, and relate to a wide variety of people who have different skills, abilities, and limitations.

It is hoped that this booklet will spur your interest in individual differences and make you more aware of people around you. And if you're interested in a career devoted to human service, it might help you think about some careers that you had not considered before.

SPECIAL EDUCATION = SPECIAL HELP

So what *is* special education? It's part of the bigger picture of public education in the United States and the ideas that helped shape it. While for many years certain children were excluded from school because they were "too handicapped" or "not ready," our national policy on education now makes it clear that no one will be denied a free, appropriate public education. Appropriate in this sense means an education that meets each student's particular needs.

This policy of universal education means that our schools will have students with a wide range of skills and abilities. It also means that we will always have children in our schools who need extra or different kinds of help in order to get the most from their educational experience. Special education is one program in the schools which is designed to help children who need special assistance in order to learn to the best of their ability.

There are two ways to describe special education: one of them focuses on

the types of *students* who are served, and the other on the types of *services* they get. We'll take a look at each.

WHO ARE THESE SPECIAL STUDENTS?

First, the majority of students in special education are called "handicapped," and must be so labeled in order to be eligible to receive special education services. But the word "handicapped" is most unfortunate, since it brings to mind many images about children which are not necessarily true. Students served in special education programs range from gifted and talented children who may or may not have handicaps, to children with mild learning and behavior problems who participate and learn in the regular classroom, to profoundly and multiply impaired students who need school programs which are very different from those offered in the standard academic curriculum. Basically, the students served in special education programs can be classified as belonging to one of five groups:

- *Children with sensory or physical impairments who have average or above-average ability*

Such students may be visually impaired, hearing impaired, or physically disabled through accident, illness, or conditions such as cerebral palsy. In spite of their physical problems, however, they are able to learn the standard curriculum and take part in the full range of social and learning activities at school if they and their teachers receive the proper assistance. Whenever possible, these students are a part of the regular school program. Special education services are provided as a *support* to the student and the regular class teacher.

- *Children with mild learning and behavior problems*

These children usually start school in regular classes, fall behind academically or cause excessive disruption in the classroom, and are referred by the teacher for evaluation for special services. They are often given such labels as "learning disabled" or "educable mentally retarded" or "behavior disordered." More boys than girls tend to be identified as needing such services, as well as disproportionate numbers of poor and minority children.

There have been many arguments about whether or not students such as these should be called "handicapped," and about whether or not they should be removed from regular classes to receive special education services. Today, professionals discourage putting labels on students. Instead, they prefer to see special education support services given to these students and their teachers so that they can perform successfully in the regular classroom.

- *Children with significant and lasting speech or language problems which interfere with their ability to communicate*

Students in need of services often have significantly delayed language skills. In addition they, or other students, may have trouble pronouncing certain sounds clearly enough to be understood in normal speech, may stutter, or may have such difficulty with voice quality that communication is hindered. Special services are provided in the schools for students with problems like these, as well as for physically and mentally handicapped students who also have significant speech or language difficulties.

- *Children with moderate to severe mental impairment, severe emotional disturbance, or physical/multiple impairments*

Severe problems such as these are frequently visible or easier to spot in early testing. Children with more observable or severe handicaps often begin receiving special education services at the preschool level. A small percentage of students who have several emotional or physical/multiple handicaps are average or even gifted in intellectual ability. Such students are often unable to master the normal academic curriculum. Instead, their teachers focus on teaching them functional skills important for daily living and for getting along in the world as adults.

In the past, we have not expected much from these students, either in their school performance or in their later adjustment to adult life. We have educated many of them in separate, special schools and then placed them in sheltered living and working arrangements as adults. Over the past ten years, however, we have begun to see that moderately and severely handicapped individuals are capable of achieving more than we first thought. Now, more attempts are being made to educate these students in special classes located in regular schools, where they can have regular

Different ages, different handicaps = Different programs to meet their needs.

Students with special gifts and talents require special services, too.

contact with nonhandicapped individuals, and to preparing them for more independent lives as adults.

- *Children with special gifts or talents in one or more areas of education*

Many school districts also offer services for the gifted or talented as part of their special education programs. Gifted students are often defined as those with IQ scores of 130 or above, but this is only part of the story! Talented students include those whose special talents may show themselves, for example, in such areas as high verbal ability, high levels of curiosity, creativity, or memory, highly skilled psychomotor ability, and/or special talents in the performing arts.

Of course, students who are gifted in one area (such as mathematics or playing the piano) are not necessarily gifted in all areas. However, if they are to get the most from their education, their special talents and abilities should not be ignored. People trained in special education do not all agree on how best to identify and serve gifted students, or even on whether gifted education should be a part of special education, although there are some gifted students who have physical and emotional handicaps. The needs of gifted students must be met, however, and more and more teachers are dedicating their careers to doing so.

DIFFERENT NEEDS, DIFFERENT WAYS TO HELP

Because the needs of students served in special education programs are so different, so are the kinds of special education programs and services that are offered. Do the words "special education" bring to your mind the image of a special, separate class of students taught by a *special teacher?* This is one way (but only one way!) of serving the needs of special students. For many moderately, severely, or multiply handicapped students, it is the traditional way that they have been given the kind of special instruction and individual help they need.

Most students who are labeled "handicapped" have mild learning or behavior problems; staying in regular classrooms for all or most of the school day is considered the most appropriate setting for their education. Special education *resource teachers* may give these students extra help and may also help their regular class teachers find and use methods and

materials that are most suitable. This means that persons preparing to work in special education must know the regular program or curriculum well, for they will probably spend a lot of time working with regular class teachers.

Most colleges and universities which prepare students to become special educators allow them to "specialize" in learning about a particular type of handicap (such as hearing impairment or mental retardation) and in a particular type of teaching role (such as resource teacher). Special training for teaching gifted students can be found under special education programs as well as in psychology and curriculum programs. These and other fields of study prepare people to work with gifted, disabled and/or handicapped individuals either in the schools or through other agencies in society. We'll mention some of these later.

SECTION II

◊ FOCUS ON CAREERS ◊

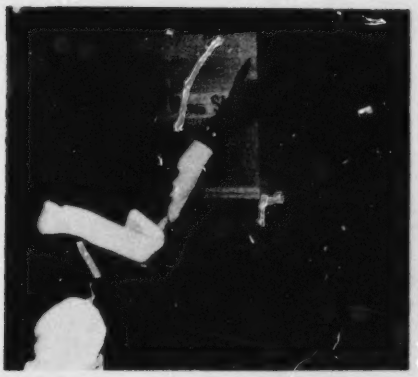
IN THE SCHOOLS

School-Based Personnel

Even though declining student enrollments in elementary and secondary schools over the past several years have meant fewer job openings for regular class teachers, there are still many career opportunities available in special education. There are several reasons for this situation. The use of better identification techniques has meant that more children who need special services are located instead of neglected. Advances in medicine save the lives of infants who once might have died at birth; when they reach school age, they often require special education services.

Career opportunities in working with handicapped and gifted children exist in a variety of settings, including public and private schools as well as

From the teacher to the entire team of professionals—Special help for each individual.



residential facilities where children are cared for on a 24-hour-a-day basis. Educational services are also provided to children in their homes or in hospitals when an extended illness keeps them from attending school. Other settings in which a special educator may work are detention centers, correctional institutions, or homes where children who are orphans or wards of the state reside.

The Special Education Teacher: Roles and Training

There are numerous roles or positions for the special education teacher, whose responsibilities will vary according to the type of special need being served as well as the setting in which the program is being delivered. Some states identify children according to specific handicapping conditions, such as physically handicapped, visually handicapped, speech defective, or educable mentally handicapped. In other states, children are grouped according to those whose handicaps are mild, are of a sensory or physical nature, or are severe and multiple in nature. Some states require identification of the gifted according to established criteria.

Training for special education teachers in undergraduate and/or graduate programs at colleges and universities includes coursework dealing with child growth and development, educational methods and materials, the psychology of exceptional children, and special courses which will enable the teacher to diagnose learning problems and needs and to understand their educational implications so that appropriate teaching methods may be used.

Appropriate teaching methods may range from modifications in the curriculum to modifications in the media used in the instruction and/or modifications in the physical environment itself. For instance, children who are mentally handicapped will need modification in the learning environment including limitation of group size and modification in the mode of communication to compensate for possible limitation of vocabulary. The teaching method will be individualized for each student.

Children with visual impairments need particular types of equipment and skills in order to take in information and communicate with others. These children may use books in different forms—large-print, braille, or

audio cassette. Likewise, children with physical handicaps may need access to classrooms that are devoid of architectural barriers and that use special equipment including desks, typewriters, speech boards, or equipment for writing.

Training of special education teachers thus includes not only a thorough understanding of how children learn but also special courses which enable the teacher to choose and use those teaching methods and materials which will most effectively meet the individual needs of each child. An internship of one or two semesters after all coursework is completed is required in most states to become certified as a teacher.

Members of a Team

Of particular importance in the work of special education teachers is their ability to be effective members of a team which includes other school personnel who are involved in the child's education. Working successfully with other school personnel is extremely important, since it is the ultimate goal of every special education teacher to have the student gain the skills needed to successfully enter or re-enter regular classes on a full-time basis. In the case of gifted students it is crucial that team planning take place.

In addition to educators there are many others who play important roles in providing an appropriate program for the handicapped or gifted child. In fact, recommendation for initial placement in many special education programs for all exceptionalities begins with an activity called the multidisciplinary staff conference where information is discussed concerning the child's educational, social, medical, and emotional history as well as intellectual, learning, and achievement abilities.

The *psychologist* is a professional on the special education team who has been trained to ascertain the child's level of functioning by assessing the child's abilities and/or deficiencies. This information plays an important role in determining the child's status so that placement in or provisions for an appropriate program can be made.

Likewise, the *school social worker* is able to secure information about the home, family, and child which may have a direct bearing on the learning problems of the child. The work of the psychologist, the social workers,

Different professionals play different roles— You can choose the part that seems right for you.

and the *school counselor* is an ongoing part of services extended to handicapped children. For instance, children with behavior disorders need help in order to understand themselves. Through the assistance of social workers, psychologists, or counselors, in addition to the teacher, parents can gain more insight in understanding their handicapped children and learn better ways of helping them at home.

The *speech-language pathologist*, another frequent member of the evaluation team and multidisciplinary staff, has been trained to assess speech and language problems and to provide direct therapy to those children demonstrating need. Often consultation services are also provided to parents, teachers, and others involved with the speech-language handicapped child to gain greater involvement and participation in helping the child.

It has been demonstrated that handicapped children respond well to early training; therefore, it is not unusual for educational programs to be offered in the public schools to children beginning at birth or at age 3. In many states there are currently a number of programs to meet the needs of children younger than 3 years of age which are staffed by *parent-infant educators* who go into the home to work with parents. They help parents to understand the handicapping condition and what the parents can do at home to assist in the infant's growth and development. Parent-infant educators also play a vital role in providing support or putting parents in touch with other support systems which enable them to cope with the anxieties and emotions generally associated with the realization that a new baby may have a severely handicapping condition.

At the other end of the age continuum, handicapped young people frequently stay in school longer, so that the upper age limit for educational services ranges from 21 to 25 years depending on the particular state law. Teachers who are interested in working with older students might enjoy preparing to be a special education teacher in a high school setting. At the present time there is a need for persons who are trained as vocational specialists who have an understanding of and certification to work with handicapped students. *Vocational counselors* and *special education vocational instructors* can have a particularly challenging and creative role in working with handicapped youth at the high school level.

The individual—student or professional—remains the all important component of a "special education."

Because special education as a field is still fairly young, much energy was devoted during the past 25 years to the development of programs that serve elementary-age children. A great deal of work remains to be done to determine how handicapped students who are nearing the end of their public school training can be trained in skills which will enable them to work or will enhance their quality of life. This area of special education needs much more exploration and refinement. Job opportunities abound for those people who have this unique combination of training and skill to work with older students.

Teacher Aides

Due to the severity of some handicapping conditions and the number of activities which generally take place in a special education program, teachers are frequently assisted by aides. Qualifications for these positions vary.

A *teacher aide* is usually a paraprofessional who has had some specific training in child development or education and can assist the teacher in the area of instruction. Other types of aides need skills in caring for more severely handicapped children and frequently assist with feeding, grooming, and other activities of daily living.

Currently, many junior colleges offer programs which lead to an associate degree and a paraprofessional status in special education. Some states have different levels of aides in special education programs. In some instances the aide does not need to have a high school diploma.

Administration and Supervision

If you believe you would like to work with exceptional children but also aspire to work toward a position in administration, special education can offer a role which combines these two interests. In the public schools, each local school district or cooperative of districts which maintains special education programs employs a *director of special education*. This administrator has the responsibility for designing the total program and implementing it with the approval of the Board of Education. Many directors have the responsibility of hiring and evaluating personnel as well as assuring that

appropriate programs are available for each handicapped or gifted child residing in the district. In larger districts or educational cooperatives, *assistant directors* or other administrative staff help in the administration of the program. To become a special education administrator you need to be a special education teacher and obtain graduate level certification in administration. Some states require a minimum number of years of classroom teaching before becoming an administrator.

If you like the thought of meshing work with handicapped and gifted children together with a leadership role, you may want to work toward becoming a *special education supervisor*. Supervisors are usually specialists in one or more areas of special education. In their role as supervisor they use this expertise to consult with teachers, making them aware of new teaching techniques, methods and materials, or information which will enhance their teaching and potential job satisfaction. To become a supervisor you need to have been a special education teacher for several years.

College Teaching

Finally, if you are interested in college teaching and, more specifically, in the preparation of teachers, the field of special education can be a very exciting one. Working in a college environment can be personally rewarding and helpful to the field. Research is needed which will be useful in making improvements in the education and training of handicapped children. New and more effective techniques are constantly being developed or perfected which improve the way handicapped children are taught. You can be a part of these explorations.

The *college professor* usually has a doctorate in special education or in a closely related area of psychology and has been a teacher, counselor, therapist, or other school-based professional working with handicapped children. The professor conducts research, teaches courses, and provides service to the community.

Working with Gifted Students

The teacher of the gifted child needs specialized training in recognizing the behaviors that indicate giftedness. Coursework will include learning

Educating others can occur in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings.

strategies that are appropriate for teaching gifted students. An undergraduate degree plus an appropriate array of courses and teaching experiences is necessary. Special attention should be given to colleges and universities that offer degrees with emphasis on education of the gifted. Continual interaction with researchers and organizations related to this exceptionality will enhance upward mobility.

Career fulfillment in this field could include a job as *psychological examiner,* because identification of the gifted child is a great challenge. Being an *inservice trainer* of teachers and other personnel not involved in direct service to the gifted child can be quite rewarding. The *inservice coordinator* generally works with a cadre of schools in a geographical area. This coordinator must have a background in the education of the gifted and must possess good leadership qualities and creative abilities. The *school counselor* is another professional who may play an important role in working with gifted students.

Education for the gifted is an international concern. The collegial relationship among educators around the world provides opportunities for research and teacher exchange. Some important vertical career possibilities are:

1. Director of programs for the gifted. (Administrative training will be helpful in this area.)
2. Teacher trainer/university professor (requires advanced degree for work at a university or established consulting firm).
3. Research and development (usually requires advanced study and an advanced degree with emphasis on specialized research techniques).
4. Writer/publisher (requires good writing skills, financing, and knowledge of the area of education of the gifted).

How Can I Learn More?

If you want to learn about how education programs for exceptional children operate in your state or if you would like to visit a program, contact your local director of special education. You may inquire at your local school board office about the possibility of doing volunteer work in special education programs. Some high schools have internship programs

where a portion of the school day can be spent assisting in a special education class. Such experiences can help you decide whether special education appears to be the career for you.

What Training Will I Need?

Preparation to become a special education teacher is usually offered as an undergraduate program leading to a bachelor's degree. Training is also available at the master's degree level. Some areas of training or university programs require a five-year course of study including an internship. Often the five-year program concludes with a master's degree. Certification in administration usually requires additional work with emphasis in school finance, school law, and administration and supervision. More and more teachers are earning graduate degrees. It is not uncommon to find classroom teachers who have earned a doctorate-level degree working in some of the larger school systems.

Financial and Other Resources

The federal government, as well as many states and private organizations, have recognized the need for more teachers of the handicapped. Scholarships are still available for students who need financial assistance. Usually these specific, federally sponsored scholarships are available directly from the college or university and are primarily available at the graduate level.

If you do not know which institutions of higher learning offer courses leading to certification in special education, contact the State Education Agency in your capital city. The staff in your State Department of Education, Office of Special Education, will be able to provide you with a list of colleges or universities with approved programs in your area of interest.

Organizations which can provide further information about the nature of specific handicapping conditions are listed in the Resources section of this publication.

IN THE HEALTH-RELATED PROFESSIONS

Personnel in the field of health-related professions are often involved in helping the individual with a handicapping condition learn and develop to the highest level of potential. Therapists and other health and social service professionals teach new skills to handicapped persons. They may help them learn functional self-help skills, become mobile, participate in vocational or social activities, and obtain leisure skills. Allied health personnel enhance the quality of life for the individual by providing for the comfort and independence of the person and by providing appropriate individualized training programs based on identified needs and goals.

There are many professions that are referred to as health-related. The professionals from the allied health field who are most frequently involved with services for handicapped individuals include physical and occupational therapists, nutritionists, and vocational rehabilitation counselors. Other related professions include recreation therapy, art therapy, and music therapy as well as rehabilitation engineering.

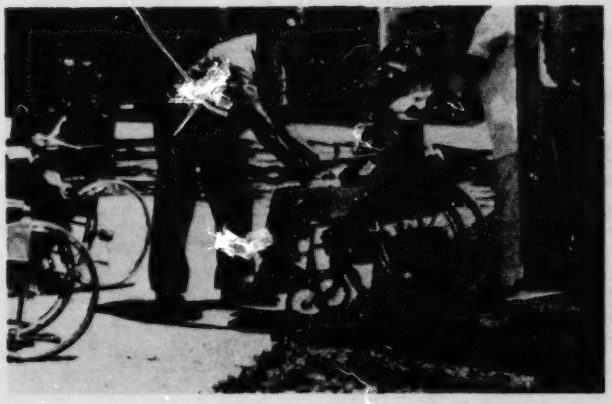
Although all health professionals focus on improving the life of the individual, each field is unique in criteria for professional training and in orientation to the services provided. Some of the health-related professions careers are discussed briefly in this section. For more information on a career in any area, consult the list of resources included at the end of this publication.

Physical Therapist

The *physical therapist* (PT) uses various techniques to help the individual develop mobility and postural abilities. The physical therapist may assist a person who has lost or never developed certain physical abilities through accident, disease, surgery, or physical anomaly.

Physical therapists work with individuals of all ages from birth to adulthood. In the schools, therapy is most concentrated on younger children who might be moderately, severely, or multiply handicapped in their development. Physical therapists may work in a school, hospital, clinic, nursing home, rehabilitation center, health agency, or private office.

All individuals strive for-and deserve-the opportunity for a fuller life



Therapists may work for the state or another agency to provide therapy in the homes of children younger than school age.

A physical therapist works under the direction of a physician to provide a specific training program for each individual. The therapist may work on gait training with one child, increasing the range of motion of a limb with another, and provide stretching exercises for another child. Procedures such as the application of heat and cold, ultrasound, and electrotherapy are all used by physical therapists.

In order to become a registered physical therapist (RPT), an individual must be accepted into an approved training program at a university or college. Professional training usually requires three years beginning with the third year of college. Individuals who desire to become physical therapists can enhance their chance of acceptance into a training program by contacting the director of that program well ahead of time, preferably during the junior year of high school. Good grades, volunteer experiences with therapists in the community, and the completion of prerequisite science and other courses during the freshman and sophomore years of college are helpful.

A *physical therapy assistant* works under the direction of a physical therapist to provide services to clients. There are community college programs or two-year training programs designed to train the physical therapy assistant.

The *physical therapy aide* may not have received any specialized training in physical therapy. Most positions require at least a high school diploma. The aide is directly supervised by a therapist in providing services to the client.

Occupational Therapist

The *occupational therapist* (OTR) helps handicapped individuals improve their skills in activities of daily living such as feeding, grooming, dressing, and toileting. The OTR may devise splints and other assistive devices, may adapt equipment such as spoons, pencils, and wheelchairs, and may also help the individual develop other skills such as eye-hand coordination and perceptual skills.

Occupational therapists provide a wide range of services and training for children. They may work with infants in the home or in an infant program to develop sensorimotor abilities, prelanguage, perceptual, and social skills. A major focus of work with school-age children is in developing independence in daily living skills such as eating, grooming, and personal hygiene. In some school districts, occupational therapists work with parents to modify the home so that a child in a wheelchair has more access to the bathroom, kitchen, and other areas of the home. In programs for older handicapped students, occupational therapists help develop vocational and leisure skills. For example, the OTR may assess sensorimotor skills required for specific vocational tasks and then devise a training program to teach the skill before the student is placed on the job.

In order to become a *registered occupational therapist*, you must be accepted into an approved training program at a college or university. Most training programs begin in the third year of college. In order to increase chances for acceptance with a training program, contact should be made early with the administrator of the program. Many occupational and physical therapy departments host an information seminar for students who may be interested in entering the program.

Rehabilitation Counselor

The *rehabilitation counselor* may be employed by a private or governmental agency to help handicapped individuals become independent, obtain employment, and take part in community life. The rehabilitation counselor helps the client develop a career or life plan in keeping with his or her physical and mental capacity.

In order to become a rehabilitation counselor, you must complete a specific course of study at a university with an accredited program. This program usually requires five years of study. A master's degree in rehabilitation is considered the basic education for a professional rehabilitation counselor.

Creative Arts Therapist

The *creative arts therapist* uses music, art, drama, dance, and/or crafts to

help handicapped persons become more aware, functional, social, or relaxed. Creative arts therapists work to help change behavior, reinforce learning in academic, social, and leisure skill areas, facilitate speech and language development, integrate motor movements and skills, and provide opportunities for exercise and recreation.

Therapists may work in community-based programs, agencies, clinics, hospitals, schools, and residential facilities. In addition to certification as a therapist, many states require that creative arts therapists be certified as teachers in their chosen field of music, art, recreation, drama, etc.

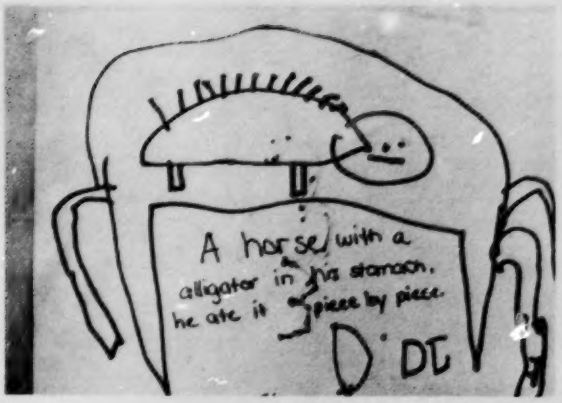
For each of the creative arts there are university training programs in some schools which offer programs to help the artist develop therapeutic skills. These programs may include training in psychology, counseling, education, and recreation in addition to coursework in the creative art. In the areas of music, art, recreation, and dance there are national organizations that certify therapists by administering a registry examination once a degree has been earned and an internship completed as part of an approved university program.

IN ANY OCCUPATION

Suppose you decide not to choose any of these occupations, but rather to become a physician, a dentist, a librarian, a business person, or a factory worker. Does this mean that you don't need to think about service to handicapped persons? Hardly.

Handicapped individuals are increasingly becoming a part of both the regular school environment and adult society. Students with mild school problems have always blended into adult society when they leave school, and typically do not need special services as adults. Individuals with sensory and physical impairments tend to integrate well into adult society, using various social service agencies to meet special needs for equipment, job training, communication devices, and other support services.

Until recently, persons who are moderately, severely, and multiply handicapped were not visible in society. They were living in isolated residential institutions or in sheltered work and living settings in the community. In the past 20 years, however, there has been a remarkable



Each individual is unique and brings his or her own unique experiences into the mainstream of society.

turnaround in this situation. Moderately and severely handicapped adults are now part of many communities, going to school with nonhandicapped people, living in small group homes in residential neighborhoods, using public transportation, shopping, using recreation establishments, and working in competitive employment in a variety of areas of business and industry. This means not only that handicapped people have more contact with general society, but also that each one of us is likely to have more and more contacts with moderately and severely handicapped adults. Often, this contact will take the form of a helping interaction.

For these reasons, *all* of our society must be aware of and sensitive to the needs of handicapped adults. All of us must be prepared to interact with the handicapped much as we would with anyone else. Shop clerks, dentists, construction workers, and office managers need to understand not only the real limitations associated with handicapping conditions, but also the supposed limitations which are often myths.

Getting to Know You

The most effective way to break down barriers and correct inaccurate ideas about other people is through direct contact. There are numerous opportunities to get to know individuals with handicaps. A disability should not be a cause for caution in approaching a fellow student for casual conversation or interaction. Just because a person has limited vision, speech difficulties, or is confined to a wheelchair is no reason to assume that he or she has basic needs or feelings that are different from anyone else. Too often, disabilities serve as a social barrier because of lack of knowledge. The only way to overcome this is to take the first step, and initiate social contact.

In many schools and communities, more formal means of getting to know handicapped individuals exists. Peer tutoring programs are common in schools which have educational programs for the moderately and severely handicapped. In this program students volunteer to work for a portion of the school week in the special class. Most communities have Special Olympics and other organized recreational opportunities for the handicapped, and are in continual need of volunteers. Many high schools and colleges have organized volunteer programs which match students

We must all be prepared: the exceptional individual to enter the mainstream and society to accept the individual behind the handicap.

with appropriate and desired opportunities for public service.

Dealing with the gifted offers challenges as well. There is a misconception about giftedness in our society: that it is a wholly desirable trait to be coveted. It is important, however, for the general public to know that giftedness can be a burden to a child who sees things differently or who suffers the accusation of "trouble maker" or "queer," or the boredom of an unchallenging classroom. These children cannot make the best use of their potential without special attention to their special needs.

In sum, whether one intends to be a teacher or a clerk, a social worker or a truck driver, it is important to know something about the nature of handicaps and disabilities, and to be an advocate for those who are different, both in school and in society. The best way to dispel myths about exceptional individuals is through direct knowledge and contact. We must all take advantage of opportunities for learning and interaction throughout our lives.

OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

In striving to provide services for individuals we refer to as "handicapped," we tend to focus so much on their differences that we convince ourselves, and sometimes the handicapped themselves, that they cannot be full, functioning members of society. We perpetuate myths about what people *can't* do, rather than focusing on what they *can* do. Further, with gifted individuals, we sometimes limit opportunities for fulfillment in our desire to avoid the appearance of favoritism.

We are, as a society, attempting to reverse these trends. To do so requires substantial commitment from each of us, and that is the essence of this message. First, to those who intend to prepare for and enter careers of service to exceptional children and youth, exciting and challenging opportunities await. By all means, pursue your interests vigorously and do not put artificial limitations on your future *or* on the future of the individuals with whom you will work.

Second, to those who intend to pursue other career patterns, *don't* assume that you don't need to know anything about the abilities and the limitations of those we call "handicapped" or "disabled." We need a

society full of people advocating for full participation by individuals who are disabled, and we need individuals in all walks of life who will not only stand up for the rights of those who are seen as different, but also make the personal commitment to be an advocate and friend.

Don't "wait until later" to get involved; the time is now. Find an opportunity to volunteer now, to learn through personal contact. And carry such activity into your adult years. The opportunity is yours for a lifetime of challenge and helping.

SECTION III

◊ RESOURCES ◊

FOR MORE INFORMATION

on careers . . .

American Art Therapy Association
302 E. Joppa Rd., Apt. 1902
Towson, MD 21204

American Association for Music Therapy
35 W. Fourth St., Room 777, Education Bldg.
New York, NY 10003

American Dance Therapy Association
2000 Century Plaza, Suite 230
Columbia, MD 21044

American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance
1900 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

American Occupational Therapy Association
1383 Piccard Drive, Suite 300
Rockville, MD 20805

American Physical Therapy Association
1156 15th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

American Society of Allied Health Professions
1 Dupont Circle, N.W., Suite 300
Washington, D.C. 20036

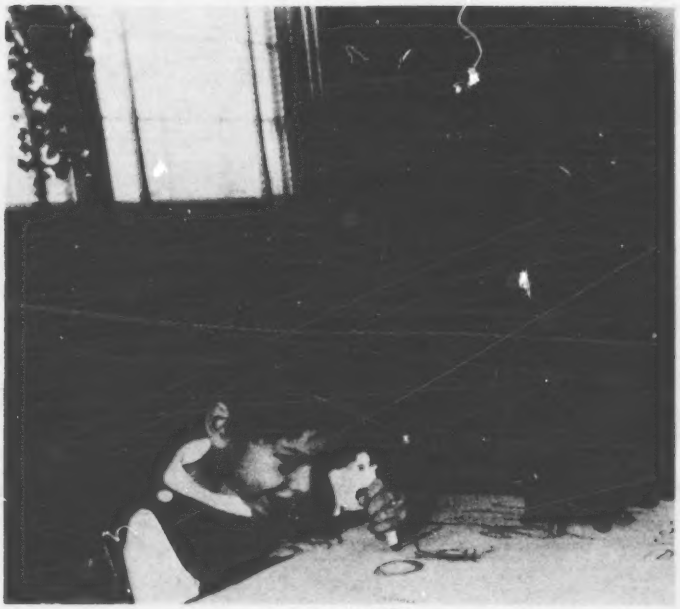
National Association for Music Therapy
1001 Connecticut, N.W., Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20036

National Association of Social Workers
1425 H Street, N W., Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20005

National Rehabilitation Association
633 S. Washington St.
Alexandria, VA 22314

on handicapping conditions . . .

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf
3417 Volta Place, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007



American Association on Mental Deficiency
5101 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Suite 405
Washington, D.C. 20016

American Foundation for the Blind, Inc.
1660 L Street, N.W., Suite 214
Washington, D.C. 20036

American Speech, Language and Hearing Association
10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234

The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps
1600 W. Armory Way
Seattle, WA 98119

The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

Council on Education of the Deaf
c/o Gallaudet College
7th and Florida Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20016

Epilepsy Foundation of America
1829 L Street, N.W., Suite 406
Washington, D.C. 20036

National Association for Retarded Citizens
2501 Avenue J
Arlington, TX 76001

National Association of the Deaf
814 Thayer Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910

National Easter Seal Society
2023 W. Ogden Avenue
Chicago, IL 60612

National Federation of the Blind, Inc.
1629 K Street, N.W., Suite 701
Washington, D.C. 20036

National Mental Health Association
1021 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

The National Society for Autistic Children
1234 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Suite 1017
Washington, D.C. 20005

National Society to Prevent Blindness
79 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10016

United Cerebral Palsy Associations
66 E. 34th Street
New York, NY 10016

on the gifted . . .

National Association for Gifted Children
2070 County Rd. H
St. Paul, MN 55112

The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

RELATED READING

Two journals can help you learn more about exceptional children and their families.

The Exceptional Parent, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215. Published bi-monthly; individual subscription, $16 per year.

TEACHING Exceptional Children, published by The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091. A journal designed for teachers of handicapped and gifted students, featuring articles on practical methods and materials for classroom use. Published quarterly; individual U.S. subscription, $15; Canada, PUAS, and all other countries, $17.50 per year; single copy, $4.00.

The Council for Exceptional Children

Founded in 1922, The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is a professional association committed to advancing the education of exceptional children and youth, both gifted and handicapped.

CEC, with 50,000 members, supports every child's right to an appropriate education and seeks to influence local, state, and federal legislation relating to handicapped and gifted children. CEC conducts conventions and conferences and maintains an information center with computer search services and an outstanding collection of special education literature.

In addition to its membership periodicals, *Exceptional Children*, and *Teaching Exceptional Children*, CEC has a publications list of 75 titles including monographs, texts, workshop kits, films, and filmstrips.

Council Headquarters are at 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091-1589.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children (ERIC-EC) is one of 16 clearinghouses in a national information system funded by the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education. Since 1966, ERIC-EC has been housed with The Council for Exceptional Children.

ERIC-EC collects, abstracts, and indexes special education documents and journals for the central ERIC database as well as for its own computer file and publications. Other activities include computer searches, search reprints, and publications. Address inquiries to the ERIC Clearinghouse at 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.